

# Quiet Cultivation

Creating an Introvert-Friendly Work Environment

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## Discussion Questions:

1. On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being extremely extroverted to 10 being extremely introverted, how would you rate the “introvert friendliness” of your work environment? What contributes to that rating?
2. Reflect on your recruiting process. In what ways does it take into account different styles of networking, self-promotion and interviewing?
3. What kind of environment do **you** find most conducive to being your best?
4. What’s one thing you have control over that would make your workplace more introvert-friendly?

## Personal Reflection Questions:

1. What’s the most important thing I want to remember from today’s presentation and discussion?
2. What’s one action I’m going to take based on the information I heard?
3. What do I want to learn more about?

# Six Things Your Introverted Employees Want to Tell You

(But Probably Won't)

By Beth L. Buelow, ACC, [TheIntrovertEntrepreneur.com](http://TheIntrovertEntrepreneur.com)

Think the introverts in your office don't have much to say? Think again! There are things that you can do to make your work environment (or home life) more "introvert friendly." However, the introverts in your life may not feel like they can make their needs known. Here are six things introverts would tell you that would make a huge difference in their productivity, effectiveness and satisfaction. This is **not** about giving special treatment; it **is** about acknowledging and honoring differences in work and communication styles.

**Give me quiet:** I do my highest quality work when I have limited distractions, and that includes noise. If I work in a cubicle and you ask me to be creative, provide alternative space that I can go to, one that's quiet and apart from the crowd. If I have my own office, understand that I sometimes need to shut the door in order to focus. I'm pretty sure it was an introvert who gave us the adage, "Silence is Golden."

**Give me space:** When information comes to me, I require time and space to process it. That's because I process internally by spending time thinking things through and synthesizing. I could give you a quick answer to something, but it won't be my best answer. This doesn't mean I'm not a quick thinker; you just don't hear me think out loud, like extroverts tend to do. So, if you ask me something and I don't answer right away, or my first response is "I don't know," I'm not resisting and I'm not clueless... I'm simply thinking.

**Ask me what I think:** It's sometimes challenging to interject or be fully heard in large meetings, or in situations that don't feel completely safe. I'm likely to listen, take notes and then share my opinions, ideas and questions with you after the group has disbanded. So my silence doesn't mean I agree, am uninterested or indifferent. If you sense that I want to speak (by noticing my body language, or that I'm trying to chime in but getting talked over), make a point to ask me what I think. The best way to do that is to ask, "Sue, is there anything you want to add right now?" No need to say "you've been awfully quiet over there"... that only contributes to me feeling self-conscious.

**Shut Up!** Because I generally like to listen more than I like to talk, I do a lot of listening. A lot. And what happens is that conversations can easily become very one-sided, because the other person – especially an extrovert who's a heavy verbal processor – doesn't pause. Doesn't ask questions. Doesn't seem to breathe (at least, that's how it can appear to me). I'll feel safe to share my thoughts and ideas if I'm part of a two-way conversation, one that's comfortable with allowing for some silence. If there's not a relatively even exchange, I become exhausted, trying to hold my thoughts in my head and not being able to speak up (it's not comfortable to interrupt). Then I lose track, experience information overload, and have nothing to say when an opportunity finally comes to speak. Spacious conversations feel GOOD. And I don't really want you to "shut up"; I simply want to be able to take what you have to offer in pieces, rather than "drinking from the fire hose."

**Give me options:** As you can tell from the other things I've shared, I think and process differently (and in reality, every person is different, even if they're the same energetic type). I like to put things in writing. I like to have time to research. I do best if there's some chance to prepare, to schedule things, or if I have a "heads up." I even have different motivation and ways of measuring my success. Give me a choice whenever possible about how I do my job, so that it is aligned with my strengths. Ask me to define my role. For instance, traditional brainstorming sessions will not produce my strongest ideas. However, if I have the option of considering the problem in advance, spending some time writing down a few ideas before speaking, or even facilitating or scribing the session, my contribution will improve tremendously.

**Don't assume:** Above all, don't assume that because I'm an introvert that I'm shy, not good with people or prefer to always stay behind the scenes. We live in a very extroverted society, a fact that's reflected in everything from office politics to what we look for in leaders. We are competitive. We expect people to be highly social. We value quick, decisive thinking and obvious charisma. Being an introvert is about where I gain and drain energy, not about my social or leadership skills. I can be a strong leader, salesperson or presenter. Notice and appreciate the gifts I bring to the table. Ask me about my ambitions and goals. Create a culture that supports both the talkative, outspoken types and the quietly thoughtful, observant types. My fellow introverts – and your bottom line – will thank you.